United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses hope for "irreversible progress" in El Salvador talks currently underway at Headquarters.

- Secretary-General emphasizes need for restructuring of United Nations in farewell statement to General Assembly.

- United Nations invited as observer at first plenary session for Convention for a Democratic South Africa, next weekend in Johannesburg.

- General Assembly appeals for assistance to Angola and Liberia; adopts resolutions on eradication of poverty, among other things.

- Administrative and Budgetary Committee approves appropriations for activities concerning Chernobyl, communications decade for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, among other things; speakers discuss United Nations financial situation.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said today that he hoped, "if not for a definitive and final agreement", at least for irriversible progress in the negotiations between the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN).

In reply to questions by correspondents this afternoon, he said working papers, containing the key points in the talks, had been presented to the parties by his Personal Representative for Central America, Alvaro de Soto. The key points included the national civilian police, the armed forces reduction, and reintegration of the FMLN into civilian life, among other things.

The Secretary-General said the parties seemed eager to reach an agreement while he -- a Latin American -- was still in office. If necessary, Mr. de Soto would continue his efforts after 31 December since he was "the soul of this negotiation", Mr. Perez de Cuéllar said.

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With two weeks left of his ten-year tenure as Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar yesterday delivered his farewell statement to the General Assembly.

Addressing the question of restructuring of the United Nations, he noted that review, reform and renewal in the Organization was necessary, if it was to keep pace with the times. However, he said, change could not be viewed as a purely managerial or administrative affair.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar told the Assembly that he envisioned the United Nations as the "central agency" for upholding the rule of law, and thereby providing the necessary equilibrium and defence against anarchy. For this, he said, it would need the cohesive management, equipped with the necessary powers and resources. But most of all, it would need to be rescued from the financial bankruptcy which dogs it at present, he said.

The new Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt, will begin his 5-year term on 1 January 1992.

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A United Nations spokesman announced today that Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar had received an invitation for the Organization to be present as an observer at the first plenary session of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa which will take place on 20 - 21 December.

The United Nations delegation will be led by Mrs. Sadago Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who will also serve as Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, and by Ibrahim A. Gambari, Chairman of the Special Committee against Apartheid and Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations. The third member of the delegation will be Sotirios Mousouris, Assistant Secretary-General for the Centre against Apartheid. They will be accompanied by four staff members of the United Nations.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General expressed his best wishes for the success of the Convention and hoped that the goals of achieving a peaceful transition to a new democratic order would be reached as soon as possible.

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On the recommendation of its Second Committee (Economic and Financial), the General Assembly this afternoon welcomed the signing of the Peace Accords for Angola, which had created political conditions for the country's economic and social rehabilitation, and reiterated its appeal to the international community to continue to render assistance necessary for that rehabilitation.

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Among six other resolutions recommended by the Second Committee, one called upon the international community to provide Liberia with assistance for the repatriation and resettlement of refugees, displaced persons and returnees, which the Assembly recognized as being important elements for facilitating the holding of democratic elections in that country.

By another resolution on international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries, the Assembly stressed the importance of effective domestic budgetary policies to mobilize and allocate domestic resources for the eradication of poverty. It also reiterated that a supportive international economic environment was crucial to the efforts of developing countries to deal with that problem.

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Appropriations totalling $933,200 for activities concerning the Chernobyl disaster, communications decades for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the living conditions for the Palestinian people were approved yesterday by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary).

During the Committee's ongoing debate on the United Nation's financial crisis and financial emergency, the Controller responded to criticism of the Secretary-General's proposal that the Organization charge interest on late or unpaid assessments. Approximately $1 billion was outstanding, which was tantamount to the United Nations giving an interst-free loan to Member States. The United Nations was not a bank, he said.

Among others addressing the Committee on that question, the representative of Norway, Inga Erikson, speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said those countries supported the proposal to charge interest at commercial rates to Member States on unpaid assessments as a general rule. As to the proposal to authorize the Secretary-General to borrow commercially, she said there would be difficulties in finding a fair formula to pay the expense of interest on the borrowed money.

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